

Message Text

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54

ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

TO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

INFO AMCONSUL ADANA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJECT: TURKISH MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

SUMMARY: IN CONTRAST PREVIOUS TURKISH MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS FOUGHT PRINCIPALLY ON LOCAL ISSUES AND PERSONALITIES, DEC 9 CONTEST IS EXPECTED TO SERVE AS QTE REFERENDUM UNQTE ON RESULTS OCT 14 GENERAL ELECTIONS, ALTHOUGH REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) LIKELY DOMINATE ISTANBUL CITY COUNCIL AS IN PAST, INCUMBENT JUSTICE PARTY (JP) MAYOR STANDS FIFTY-FIFTY CHANCE REELECTION ON BASIS PUBLIC WORKS ACHIEVEMENTS. END SUMMARY

1. ALTHOUGH TURKISH MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS TRADITIONALLY HAVE CENTERED ON LOCAL ISSUES AND PERSONALITIES AS DISTINCT FROM NATIONAL ZEZNQONS, #OBSERVERS HERE BELIEVE THAT THE DEC 9 CONTEST WILL ALSO SERVE AS A QTE REFERENDUM UNQTE OVER THE RESULTS OF THE OCT 14 GENERAL ELECTIONS. AS THE IMPASSE IN FORMING A GOVT HAS CONTINUED THIS QTE REFERENDUM UNQTE VIEW OF THE LOCAL ELECTIONS HAS GAINED CURRENCY. ALTHOUGH THE CANDIDATES THEMSELVES HAVE STUCK TO LOCAL PROBLEMS, THEIR PARTIES, ESPECIALLY THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLE(& 0-456 (RPP), HAVE NOT. IN A SPEECH NOV 29 IN LOW-INCOME DISTRICT OF ISTANBUL, RPP LEADER ECEVIT VERY CLEARLY LINKED THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LOCAL ELECTIONS TO THE NATIONAL PROBLEM OF FORMING A GOVT

AND CALLED ON THE QTE PEOPLE UNQTE TO HELP THE RPP SHOW
WHAT IT COULD DO

2. WHILE THE JUSTICE PARTY HERE HAS MADE NO SIGNIFICANT
PUBLIC STATEMENT, FARUK AKCER, PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT OF INCUM-
BENT JUSTICE PARTY MAYOR FAHRI ATABEY, TOLD US PRIVATELY
THAT NATIONAL ISSUES WERE PLAYING A DOMINANT ROLE IN THESE
'73&48589, , TO THE EXTENT THAT HE EXPECTED THE RPP TO
SWEEP ANKARA, MAKE SIGNIFICANT ADVANCES IN IZMIR AND
INCREASE ITS HOLD ON THE ISTANBUL CITY COUNCIL DESPITE
FACT THAT RPP CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR AHMET ISVAN IS UNKNOWN
TO VOTERS, AKCER GAVE ATABEY ONLY 50 PERCENT CHANCE OF
REELECTION, IN CONTRAST TO WEAK AND DIVIDED JP ORGANIZA-
TION, HE SAID RPP WELL-ORGANIZED AND FINANCED AND RECEIVING
ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT OF STUDENTS AND TRADE UNIONS, AKCER
SAID ATABEY'S CAMPAIGN ALMOST TOTALLY FINANCED AND OPERATED
BY AMATEUR QTE FRIENDS OF ATABEY UNQTE COMMITTEE WITH VERY
LITTLE FINANCIAL OR OTHER HELP FROM LOCAL JP ORGANIZATION.
HE SAID LOCAL JP STILL CONTROLLED BY ASSOCIATES OF FARUK
ILGAZ, RECENTLY RESIGNED HEAD OF ISTANBUL JP ORGANIZATION
WHO SOUGHT UNSUCCESSFULPY TO REPLACE ATEBEY AS JP CANDIDATE.

3. TWO QUITE DIFFERENT MEN, ABDI IPECI, EDITOR OF MILLIYET,
AND KEMAL SULKER, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE REVOLUTIONARY
LABOR CONFEDERATION DISK SHARE IN VARYING DEGREES LOCAL
ELECTIONS WILL SERVE AS NATIONAL REFERENDUM. IPEKCI TOLD
US THAT THE NATIONAL PARTIES WERE WAITING TO SEE THE RE-
SULTS OF THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS BEFORE TAKING ANY FURTHER
STEPS TO FORM A GOVT. HE EXPECTED A EGRONG RPP SHOWING,
SINCE ISTANBUL HAS ALWAYS BEEN PRE-DOMINANTLY RPP, BUT
HE TOO GAVE ATABEY A FIFTY-FIFTY CHANCE OF WINNING ON THE
BASIS OF HIS PUBLIC WORKS RECORD. HE ADMITTED IT VERY
DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE, EVEN AFTER THE ELECTION, TO WHAT
EXTENT VOTERS IN FACT MOTIVATED BY LOCAL OR NATIONAL ISSUES
BUT GIVEN CURRENT GOVT IMPASSE COMMENTATORS WILL LOOK FOR
NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE IN ANY CASE.

3. SULKER WAS MORE CATEGORICAL. IN HIS VIEW THESE ELEC-
TIONS WERE WHAT THE RPP NEEDED TO SHOW ITS TRUE STRENGTH.
SINCE THE NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY (NSP), WHICH CONFUSED
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THE OCT 14 ELECTION RESULTS, IS POORLY ORGANIZED AT THE
LOCAL LEVEL, THE RPP OUGHT TO MAKE A CLEAN SWEEP. ALTHOUGH
AHMET ISVAN, IS AN UNKNOWN PERSONALITY, PERSONAL POPULARITY
WILL MEAN LITTLE. THE VOTERS WILL BE CHOOSING A PARTY AND
NOT A MAN, ACCORDING TO SULKER.

4. COMMENT: WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ATABEY'S PERSONAL
PROPAGANDA IT APPEARS THAT THE CENTRAL ORANIZATION OF THE

JUSTICE PARTY IS MAKING LITTLE REAL EFFORT TO INCREASE JP STRENGTH IN ISTANBUL. WHILE PART OF THIS LACK OF VIGOR MAY BE ATTRIBUTABLE TO WEAK ORGANIZATION AND THE BITTER ATABEY-ILGAZ FEUD, IT MAY ALSO BE DUE TO A SENSE OF DEAFEATISM IN THE FACE OF THE KNOWN STRENGTH OF THE RPP. THE RPP, ON THE OTHER HAND IS TAKING LITTLE FOR GRANTED. DESPITE ITS STRENGTH ECEVIT TO DATE HAS BEEN THE ONLY NATIONAL PARTY LEADER TO SPEAK IN ISTANBUL. IN CONTRAST TO ATABEY'S GRAND PLANS FOR AN ISTANBUL SUBWAY SYSTEM, RPP CANDIDATE ISVAN HAS BEEN FOCUSING ON DAY TO DAY PROBLEMS SUCH AS COST OF LIVING, LACK OF ELECTRICITY, WATER AND TRASH COLLECTION AND SIMILAR ISSUES BEARING DIRECTLY ON DAILY LIFE. WHILE CITY GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO INFLUENCE MANY OF THESE PROBLEMS MAY BE SLIGHT, ISVAN'S APPROACH MAY FIND STRONG SUPPORT AMONG BOTH LOW INCOME WORKERS IN GECEKONDU AREAS (SLUMS) AND MIDDLE CLASS WORKERS FRUSTRATED BY URBAN PROBLEMS AND WANTING A CHANGE.

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